

Section 1

Fashion Fix



If you have ever thought that buying clothes online is not for you (can't touch the fabric, can't really see what it looks like, might have to send it back), it's definitely time to think again.

Not only are excellent fashion websites arriving on the scene at regular intervals, from mainline designer brands to high street chains – some directly related to stores you probably already know and love and others totally new – but fashion retailers who launched a few years ago with fairly basic websites have got their acts together to offer clear and easy-to-use online services with great photos and each season's must-have clothes. Not only that, but many of them are excellent for reading up on the season's trends and working out which bits will be right for you.

'But ...' you may well be saying in answer to this, 'I like going shopping for clothes, trying them on, finding something special, getting that "I really need it now" buzz.' Well, so do I and I'd never suggest that buying clothes online is going to replace that great therapy of finding something gorgeous in the shops. However, there are a few excellent reasons for shopping for clothes online.

- Firstly, if you're really short of time and never manage to find what you're looking for 'out there' in the couple of hours you usually have on a Saturday afternoon.
- Secondly, you may live a distance away from the shops you'd really like to go to and ...
- Thirdly, there's the sheer choice of what you can find online – you'd need a huge amount of time to be able to see the range that's available on the web in the stores; frankly, it just wouldn't be possible. Online, you can flit from chic, modern Freda (Matches' own brand) to Gucci, River Island and Oasis (with a quick stopoff at Vogue to check up on the trends and make sure you're getting the right idea), all while you're sitting comfortably with a cup of coffee (or wine, of course). I'm sure you'll be really surprised at what's available.

Now that express delivery services, free postage and (sometimes) free returns are becoming the norm among the better online clothes retailers, making it easier than ever before and you *can* have it tomorrow, there's no longer any excuse not to give it a try.



Chapter 1



Luxury Fashion Brands

There's no doubt that this is an exciting time for luxury brands and the world wide web as they all begin to wake up to the fact that the online global marketplace is with us to stay, not as a threat but as a fabulous, glittering opportunity.

With brands such as Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Marni and Paul Smith taking the plunge and offering if not clothing; luxury shoes and handbags, watches, jewellery and gifts online, there's literally nothing you can't find at any price level and at some of the websites below, the sky really is the limit.

For more luxury brands visit the jewellery section, where you can invest in sublime diamonds, pearls and other precious stones from jewellers such as Tiffany, Boodles and Mikimoto.

Needless to say, you choose how much you spend, but one of the best things, to my mind, about these brands offering their wares online is that I no longer have to browse under the watchful eyes of superbly groomed shop assistants who, as I walk through the door, weigh me up (handbag, shoes, jacket) and know for a fact that I'm not going to be buying that £1000 handbag today – I just want to look. Now I can feast my eyes wherever and whenever I want for as long as I want at any time of day or night. So can you. Enjoy.

Sites to Visit

www.amandawakeley.com

Amanda Wakeley has launched her new website, where you can order from her luxuriously chic collection of dresses and separates, plus accessories such as shoes, belts and stoles. Everything here is in the highest quality fabric, beautifully made, and you can expect to find detailing such as beading, lace edging and silk satin trims.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based:

UK

Express Delivery Option? (UK) No

Gift Wrapping Option? No

Returns Procedure: Down to you

www.brownsfashion.com

The Browns website is not only very clear and easy to navigate but also offers a mouthwatering list of contemporary designers including Lanvin, Balenciaga, Missoni and Paul Smith, plus Dolce & Gabbana, Roberto Cavalli, Ann Demeulemeister and Issa. There are several views of each item together with lots of essential information and size charts. Look here, too, for your next Luella (or Fendi or Marni) handbag fix or pair of heels (Christian Louboutin or Marc Jacobs).

Site Usability: ★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury/Medium

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based:

UK

Express Delivery Option? (UK) No

Gift Wrapping Option? No

Returns Procedure: Down to you and complicated

www.burberry.com

Now you can buy from Burberry online through its beautifully designed website. You can browse the luxuriously photographed collections including Burberry Prorsum, Burberry London and the Icons Collection, then click through to Shop Online and choose from menswear, womenswear, bags and accessories. If you want to see what's coming next you can preview the new collections. Expect superb quality and gorgeous packaging.

Site Usability: ★★★★★
 Product Range: ★★★★★
 Price Range: Luxury
 Delivery Area: UK but US site available

Based: UK
 Express Delivery Option? (UK) Automatic
 Gift Wrapping Option? No
 Returns Procedure: Down to you and complicated

www.dior.com

At luxury brand Christian Dior's online boutique you can purchase from the range of covetable handbags, shoes and boots, small leather accessories, scarves, watches and fine jewellery. Prices are steep, as you would expect, but if you want to be carrying the latest version of the instantly recognisable Gauchon or My Dior handbag on your arm this season you'll no doubt be prepared. Dior has specific websites for overseas shipping so you need to check whether there is one for your country.

Site Usability: ★★★★★
 Product Range: ★★★★★
 Price Range: Luxury
 Delivery Area: UK but US and other sites available

Based: UK
 Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes
 Gift Wrapping Option? No, but beautiful packaging is standard
 Returns Procedure: Down to you and complicated

www.dvflondon.com

Diane von Furstenberg. How can you resist? Check out the latest arrivals in each new season's collection. Order one of her famous wrap dresses, skirts, tops or trousers and take a look at the catwalk pictures for this season or last. This is an innovative website and it may take a moment or two to learn how to navigate, but it'll be well worth the effort.

Site Usability: ★★★★★
 Product Range: ★★★
 Price Range: Luxury/Medium
 Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: US
 Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes
 Gift Wrapping Option? Yes
 Returns Procedure: Down to you and complicated

www.escada.com

You'll probably be surprised at the range of clothes and accessories available on Escada's pretty website, where you'll find both the Escada and Escada Sport brands offering seriously beautiful and seriously expensive cocktail and evening dresses, skirts, jackets, shirts and knitwear, plus

stylish sporty casual wear, handbags, belts, small leather goods and fragrance. They'll be happy to gift wrap and send your order out on your behalf – if you can bear to give away anything here.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury

Delivery Area: EU

Based: EU

Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes

Gift Wrapping Option? Yes

Returns Procedure: Contact them to arrange

www.forzieri.com

Florence-based Forzieri offers a wide range of products from some world-famous designers such as Gucci, Miu Miu, Dolce & Gabbana, Fendi and Gianfranco Ferre. You can choose from the highest quality leather jackets, shoes, bags, briefcases, wallets, gloves, scarves, belts, jewellery and other accessories, all for both men and women. It's a beautifully laid out website with clear pictures and they'll deliver fast all over the world.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury/Medium

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: Italy

Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes

Gift Wrapping Option? Yes

Returns Procedure: Down to you

www.lineafashion.com

Linea started life as a boutique in London's Hampstead, offering designer-wear from around the world. The shop is now online, with the range clearly photographed so you can see each item properly. Included are collections from international designers such as Blumarine, Celine, Etro, Gharani Strok, Juicy Couture, Missoni and Emanuel Ungaro, plus handbags and shoes by Hogan, Tods and Celine. If you're in a buying mood, this could be a dangerous site to visit.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury/Medium

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: UK

Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes

Gift Wrapping Option? No

Returns Procedure: Down to you and complicated

www.luisaviaroma.com

This excellent luxury online boutique is based, not surprisingly, at No 3 Via Roma, Florence, Italy. It offers worldwide shipping on a wonderful range of designers, including Burberry, Chloe, Balenciaga, Lanvin, Narcisco Rodruiguez, Roberto Cavalli and Missoni. Prices are exactly as you would expect them to be, but there are several clear views of each item - the range is exceptional.

Site Usability: ★★★★★
 Product Range: ★★★★★
 Price Range: Luxury/Medium
 Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: Italy
 Express Delivery Option? (UK) No
 Gift Wrapping Option? No
 Returns Procedure: Down to you

www.marni.com

Luxury brand Marni has launched its high-tech 'virtual store' where all the garments seem to be hanging in mid-air. Everything is clearly photographed and you can see several views of each. Register with the site so that you can create 'My Style Notes', where you can view all the pieces you've selected together in one place and then see whether you can resist putting them all in your basket. Be warned - most items don't go beyond size 44/12. This really is high-fashion online shopping at its best, so take time to look round.

Site Usability: ★★★★★
 Product Range: ★★★★★
 Price Range: Luxury
 Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: UK
 Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes
 Gift Wrapping Option? No
 Returns Procedure: Down to you

www.matchesfashion.com

Designer boutique Matches is famous for offering a unique, personal service together with a mouthwatering choice of designers such as Dolce & Gabbana, Bottega Veneta, Chloe, Christian Louboutin, Lanvin, Marc Jacobs, Missoni and Stella McCartney. You can now find this excellent service and the full range of designers online, where you can place your order directly through the website or search through the entire season's Lookbook, then call for availability when you find something

you like. They'll be delighted to help you choose the essential pieces for each season.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: UK

Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes

Gift Wrapping Option? Yes

Returns Procedure: Down to you

www.net-a-porter.com

This is the über-fashionista's website, where you'll find the most impressive range of designer clothes and accessories available online and a retailer that's becoming increasingly well known for its clever buying, excellent service and attractive packaging. So if you're looking for something special with a designer label, such as Marc Jacobs, Alexander McQueen, Burberry, Roland Mouret, Alberta Feretti, Marni, Jimmy Choo or Paul Smith (the list goes on and on), you should definitely have a look here.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: UK

Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes

Gift Wrapping Option? Yes

Returns Procedure: Free using their DHL service

www.paulsmith.co.uk

One of the most successful and internationally well-known British designers, with several collections including Paul Smith Black, Jeans and Fragrance, his website is, as you would probably expect, different and idiosyncratic. Here you'll find a selection of his jeans, shoes, knitwear, T-shirts and accessories, plus a small amount of tailoring, and there are several clear views of each item. This is also a great place for gifts for Paul Smith fans.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury/Medium

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: UK

Express Delivery Option? (UK) Yes

Gift Wrapping Option? Yes

Returns Procedure: Down to you

www.shoptommy.co.uk

Yes, US brand Tommy Hilfiger is now online, offering an excellent selection of modern daywear and accessories from cashmere/cotton cable knitwear, jeans and winter jackets and coats to bags and wallets, snow boots and shoes and chic skiwear. There's also a gift section and the option of gift boxing for all items. This is a really easy website to shop from and a must to have a look at if you want to add some new casual wear to your wardrobe.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Medium

Delivery Area: Worldwide

Based: UK

Express Delivery Option? (UK) No

Gift Wrapping Option? Yes

Returns Procedure: Down to you

www.zenggi.com

Keep your credit cards firmly locked away when you start to look at this Netherlands-based website as the temptation levels are extremely high. Zenggi is a new online luxury clothing and accessories store offering a chic, high-quality, covetable range. When you click on an item you can see a stylish model pic showing your chosen piece and how to accessorise it. Gift packaging is standard.

Site Usability: ★★★★★

Product Range: ★★★★★

Price Range: Luxury

Delivery Area: EU

Based: Netherlands

Express Delivery Option? (UK) No

Gift Wrapping Option? Yes

Returns Procedure: Down to you